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ABSTRACT

The literacy club described is a model cross-aged, paired reading program that is being successfully used in an elementary school in Redwood City, California to teach literacy skills to non-native speakers of English. The literacy club pairs older students--"rapid readers"--with younger students--"little readers"--in a yearlong reading experience that is managed by the teachers from both classes. As mentors, the rapid readers develop their literacy, reading, and social skills by helping little readers learn to read. This guide outlines the day-to-day activities students engage in as part of the program at the elementary school level and provides invaluable insights into the students' development and to the implementation of the literacy club program. A step-by-step checklist for replicating the literacy club model program at other schools and grade levels is provided. (VWL)

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NCBE
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The Literacy Club: A Cross-age Tutoring/ Paired Reading Project

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Introduction

"Being with my Little Reader is like training a dolphin because my L.R. is already very intelligent."

"I am like a mom, because no matter what, I will never stop leading the way for my Little Reader."

"Being with my Little Reader is like a basketball, because sometimes I feel very bouncing when they are very good."

These quotations are the impressions of sixth grade students at the end of May, after a year of participating twice a week in a cross-age tutoring project known as **The Literacy Club**. Not all of their days were good ones. Sometimes they got tired of being in the project. Sometimes they forgot to focus on the task at hand. Often they found ways to teach a new concept or clarify part of a story which might otherwise have been confusing or missed altogether. Always, they faced all of the difficulties of providing one-to-one time with a first grade partner they had chosen. They had made a commitment, and they made sure they fulfilled all of their obligations, and then some.

These students and their 30 classmates have been successful in a school which, like many all over North America, is facing many challenges: overcrowding and growing class size; classrooms in which five to seven languages are spoken; large numbers of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds; homes where reading and writing are not frequent; unprecedented cultural and ethnic diversity; large numbers of students with low self-esteem.

In fact, most of the students in The Literacy Club face another challenge: they are learning English as an additional language. Their primary languages are often ones from groups in Southeast Asia, languages which no credentialed teacher speaks; in addition, there are few reading texts in these languages for young children.

But despite what could be a bleak picture, a powerful model began evolving at an elementary school in Stockton, California, which paired older and younger students for the purpose of acquiring literacy. Students were encouraged to use their common native language to talk about texts, and write in their first language, if they could and chose to do so. These events were followed by a reflective process whereby the older students wrote about their teaching experiences in **Field Notes**, discussed issues with each other, and planned for the next teaching day. The results, on many fronts, have been astounding.

This guide, therefore, is a description of The Literacy Club model, shared so that teachers can replicate it in their own schools. The two teachers who have been pioneering this model, Barbara Cook and Mary Stirton, have also been sharing their model with other teachers both at their school and elsewhere. Although Cook is a sixth grade teacher and Stirton a first grade teacher, many other grade level connections are possible. Experience shows that it is most helpful to have two or three grade levels between tutor and tutee, but many combinations have been successful.

Underlying Principles

Begun in 1989, The Literacy Club continues to change into a more elaborate, complex model as time goes on. However, although the model is flexible, accommodating many differences in teachers and students, there have been several principles that have guided its development:

1. Every child in the classroom must be involved in The Literacy Club. It is not to be seen as a frill or a reward that better students are able to do when the real "work" is finished; instead, it is to be a linchpin of the language arts program, whether there are a few or a lot of students from diverse backgrounds.
2. The life skills of students from many ethnic communities frequently include care giving and cooperation, skills which may or may not be recognized or utilized in school communities. The Literacy Club values and uses these life skills.
3. The heritage language of students from many ethnic backgrounds, though often not understood by school personnel, can nevertheless be supported by not only allowing but also encouraging the use of the language at school. The Literacy Club creates environments where the heritage language can grow in cognitively defensible ways through teaching of content. The data that show that strength in a first language will strengthen the second language are well accepted, and every avenue should be used to encourage such use.
4. Language development, both oral and written, is best acquired through interaction with more linguistically proficient users. In both a first and second language, the importance of language users to negotiate content in meaningful ways, while the more proficient user provides input tailored in many ways, has, likewise, been well-documented. That input can be in writing, and, given a setting where a more advanced care giver is present, the meaning and the text can often be brought together.
5. Students must engage in active, not passive, learning experiences. This is particularly true of early adolescent students who must see the usefulness of their behaviors. Such students frequently have more personal-social concerns than academic goals, and thus, activities should include opportunities for talking and problem solving.
6. Students must engage in authentic experiences; they must read for real purposes and write texts that will be read by real audiences. Likewise, they must learn to become self-sufficient, trusted, empowered human beings by engaging in situations that emphasize these values.

The Literacy Club Model

This project is patterned after a model initiated by Shirley Brice Heath and put into practice by Leslie Mangiola and Kathleen Short in Redwood City, California (1986). About half of the older students, self-named as the "Rapid Readers" (RR), go to the classroom of the younger students, referred to as the "Little Readers" (LR), and vice versa. Each RR pairs with an LR after being trained in ways to share books, write lesson plans, help someone learn to write, and teach other things LRs need to know to be successful. Then, the fun begins! The older students are in complete control of planning sessions and managing the activities. Each 30-40 minute session is followed by the RRs returning to the classroom to reflect on the process and write **Field Notes**. The class discusses issues of teaching they have encountered and each RR plans for the next session.

There have been times when teachers using the Literacy Club model—especially those whose education, philosophy, and classroom environment are founded on a traditional, transmission paradigm—have been hesitant about giving RRs the high degree of autonomy the program requires. But experience has shown that it is critical that teachers adhere to the underlying principles of The Literacy Club and place their trust in their students; by doing so, teachers will be greatly rewarded by having growth take place.

Goals of the Literacy Club

Early in the year, the teachers of both age groups talk to the RRs about overall expectations, emphasizing that teachers always need to set goals. Here is the list of goals which have framed The Literacy Club for several years.

Goals for RRs from a Primary Teacher

1. Help Little Readers to be confident when they are trying out reading and writing.
2. Be a friend and give support when Little Readers are trying new things.
3. Help Little Readers to tell their own stories.
4. Help Little Readers make guesses about how to write words.

Goals for RRs from an Intermediate Teacher

1. Gain confidence in yourself.
2. Be aware of the knowledge you have so you can share it with others.
3. Be a good observer.
4. Be able to record what you've seen.
5. Be aware of your Little Reader's needs and be able to adapt to those needs.
6. Plan and carry out your plans.
7. Keep learning about the literacy process so you will become a better reader and writer.

Orientation and In-Service Training Sessions

Using these goals, the teachers plan a 4-6 week series of in-service training sessions framed around the goals. These will be the first of many on-going sessions throughout the year. Setting the expectation of the importance of RRs' roles is crucial; a visit from the principal, education professors, or other notaries can add to the message of being a responsible teacher. And RRs are always referred to as "teacher."

Here are some aspects to keep in mind while preparing for the training sessions:

1. Be clear about your own expectations and share them with the RRs. The goals you establish don't need to be the goals listed here; in fact, it is better to personalize your own.
2. Talk about what is meant by interpersonal or "people" skills and how having them will make it easier for RRs to reach their goals.

3. Provide information on teaching strategies, lesson plans, ways to share books, and elements of literature, such as character, setting, conflict, and theme. Let RRs know that this knowledge will help them be better teachers.
4. Examine how good teaching looks and sounds. Show a video, if possible, of another teacher engaged in a discussion of books.
5. Talk about some of the activities students can do to make the stories comprehensive to a first grader. Role playing, puppet plays, and diorama are a few ideas. The primary teacher can talk to the RRs about what younger students can do, developmentally.
6. Remind RRs that first graders are just beginning to write and tell them about temporary or invented spellings. It is helpful to make permanent posters of the stages of spelling development.
7. Give time for RRs to make a list of questions which can be asked as they read to their LRs.
8. Give several weeks for RRs to become familiar with books they can read to an LR. They can do book talks and cards to help others in the class become knowledgeable about a wide range of books. If books are available in the students' first language(s), they should be sought after. The importance of this activity cannot be overemphasized. When the principle of including everyone is adhered to, the teacher has the responsibility for assuring success for everyone. If an RR is a new learner of English and there are no materials available in his/her first language, then use those English language materials that are most accessible for the student in his/her sessions with the LR. In fact, predictable texts are so accessible for younger readers that it is easy to convince new learners of English to learn to read them because they will be reading them, in an authentic experience, to their LR. A pool of books can be available for all students to use; these books can also be available for the LRs to read at other times. Critical to the success of The Literacy Club is that the LRs choose the books they will have read to them. Children choose books they are familiar with and, therefore, tap into their own schema about the content. When the content becomes familiar, they can begin to pay attention to the language; thus, they virtually become their own teachers of language and literacy.
9. Continue to refer to the goals of the teacher of the LR.

The concepts and information given to the RRs in these training sessions will be shared with LRs in some form. At the same time, gaps in learning and understanding are being filled for RRs; sometimes the RRs who are becoming bilingual have missed out on their native language literacy or have been taught exclusively in English and have missed out on these concepts when they were first introduced to literacy. Nothing makes information more concrete than teaching it to someone else; and teaching strategies and ideas which help the RRs understand the nature of learning, teaching, literacy, and so forth makes them more successful in the education system.

Early discussions can be about ways RRs can make LRs feel more comfortable, what they can say and do, and ways to ensure that the LRs are not frightened. This is a particularly good time for the LRs' teacher to explain attention spans and other relevant concepts of human development. Students often show great empathy. Even those with the worst behavioral problems and least developed social skills take seriously to the task of helping their LRs have a positive experience. It is also helpful to point out to RRs that LRs will see them as role models and that they will have the same LR all year. It is important for them to create a favorable first impression when they begin the process.

One of the earliest training sessions has to do with how to be active participants in interactions. Reminders about "meeting students where they are" are critical; encourage RRs to find out some of the things their new friends do and do not like and other topics they can talk about. Because two of the goals of The Literacy Club are "be a good observer" and "be aware of the LR's needs," teach the RRs to watch LRs closely to see how they react to the situation. If possible, videotape the RRs with the LRs or use videos of other young children to help the RRs become good "kid-watchers." Also share writing samples of young children. Regularly remind the RRs that they are in charge and that they must use their best judgment.

One effective training session asks the RRs to list possible questions they can ask their new friends, things they would really like to know about their LRs. Here is a list of some of the questions generated from several literacy clubs:

1. How old are you?
2. What kind of books do you like to read?
3. Do you like to read?
4. What kind of sports do you like?
5. What kind of things do you like to do?
6. What are your least favorite things?
7. Do you have any brothers and sisters?
8. Do you have a Nintendo?
9. Do you want me to be your Rapid Reader?

And so it goes. It's usually obvious that students know what is needed, but it is amazing to see the grown-up ways in which they eventually come to handle their responsibilities. They become sensitive and caring, sometimes in ways not so evident at other times in the school day.

The Mixer Activity

The means by which younger and older students find each other is through a **Mixer Activity** the purpose of which is to give the members of the two classes an opportunity to get to know one another on an informal basis. The RRs have a chance to observe the behavior of first graders. For some, this is a new experience.

With everyone in one room, the teachers should begin by reading a book (such as *The quilt story* by Tony Johnston, 1985). The most important criteria is to select a popular, predictable book that describes or suggests an activity both classes would enjoy. Then the RRs begin to find partners. Be flexible at first: remind everyone that the pairings are temporary until every Rapid Reader has had a chance to work with a Little Reader and to decide if things will work out. During this time, watch for potential problems, such as the pairing of two extremely active children who might have trouble focusing on the tasks at hand, or of two particularly strong-willed children who might have difficulty getting along. Experience has shown that teachers suggest changing partners in only a couple of instances; generally, the changes are recommended to maximize the number of partnerships where both students speak the same first language. The kids seem to do the rest quite naturally. They talk together and get to know

one another. Occasionally an LR, particularly one learning English as an additional language, may be afraid of the older students. However, after a few sessions, the LRs become more comfortable and begin to make friends with the older students. The LRs become more settled into their school community.

As the Mixer Activity proceeds, each RR helps his/her LR to design a quilt square that shows something special about the LR. The RRs also design squares showing their own hobbies or special interests. The squares are then put together to form a colorful quilt. The finished product becomes a means to remember who have become partners and it is an excellent conversation piece, helping all of the children to know one another better.

It takes three sessions to complete the Mixer Activity and after each session, the RRs return to the room to record the things they see and hear. They respond to the day's events with their thoughts. This writing of **Field Notes** becomes a critical part of The Literacy Club, an event which will take place after every session with the LRs. Self-evaluation, therefore, begins at the very start. In the subsequent discussion, the goals for the LRs can be reviewed, especially those set to help the LR to be a risk-taker. RRs can evaluate the extent to which their own language and behavior related to that goal and plan ways to either continue those behaviors or change to more effective techniques.

There is one final aspect of the teacher's role during the Mixer Activity that should be addressed: everyone does not always perform as would be hoped. Some RRs are prepared and responsible, but a few may seem to forget what they are supposed to be doing, be distracted, talk to other students, or try to leave the room. The teacher should take note of this behavior and meet with the individual students privately, *after* the Mixer Activity. Intervening in front of the LRs can undermine the RR's authority as a teacher. When you speak with the RRs, praise them first for good behaviors to set a nonconfrontational tone. Act as a colleague rather than a critic. Sometimes they will be aware of the problems. If this is not the case, share what you have observed, and talk about what can be done to improve the situation. This helps to prevent feelings of resentment and establishes them as teachers who are getting help from other teachers. Frequently the suggestions you give will be implemented at the next meeting. This collaborative tone continues throughout the year through discussions of problems and questions; everyone works together to lend support and searches for solutions.

Considerations for Pairing Rapid Readers and Little Readers

Over the years, several principles have emerged that seem to lead to successful pairings.

1. **First Language.** It is helpful, but not necessary, for partners to speak the same first language or be fluent in a common language, usually English. RRs can support one another as interpreters if there is a language mismatch between partners. However, when students of the same language appear to enjoy each others' company, encourage them to work together. The strength they will achieve in using their native language will be beneficial.
2. **Gender.** Most combinations seem to work effectively. However, there appear to be more conflicts when male RRs pair with female LRs. Some female LRs feel uncomfortable and show less progress than their counterparts, especially if male RRs are aggressive or dominating.
3. **Personality.** Introverts and extroverts can be mixed or matched. The main thing to consider is whether the individuals are comfortable with the arrangement. Whether they chose to be partners or were paired by a teacher also makes a significant difference.

4. **Academic Ability.** In most cases, whether the RRs or LRs are high, low, or average in their academic abilities does not seem to be a significant factor. Again, if the students are comfortable with the arrangement, they will find ways to work together regardless of labels.
5. **Behavior.** This area does need considerable monitoring. As the students are looking for their partners, watch their behavior and cooperation. Intervene if students might keep each other from focusing and making a responsible effort. The experience of Cook and Stirton, who pioneered The Literacy Club, shows that students will try harder to make things work when they have chosen their own partners. It is helpful to explain to the RRs the considerations for choosing a partner, and then let the students find each other. Occasionally, switches must be made because of mismatches, but RRs are frequently reluctant to do that and work hard to find successful strategies to work with the LR. Some teachers prefer to pair students based on factors such as academic ability and language development; however, the principle of having faith in learners is particularly important because students are amazing in their adaptability.

A Typical Week

1. Hold half-hour sessions twice a week. (Tuesday/Thursday, Wednesday/Friday, or any two consecutive days other than Monday are suggested. Monday is better used as a planning day.)
2. After most sessions, the LRs meet with their teacher for a debriefing session. Children share their experiences, often standing in front of the class. The teacher then makes a chart of their comments, resulting in a **Language Experience** which can be used for a while as a text for literacy instruction. Teachers of LRs who are a bit older can have their children write notes to their RRs. The charts are given to the RRs as feedback for future planning. Comments such as the following have appeared on the charts: "I like my friend." "I like my RR reading to me." "My RR never lets me read." (The latter comment led to RRs planning many more opportunities for the LR to read self-chosen books.)
3. After each session, Rapid Readers write **Field Notes**. Give 10-20 minutes after each reading session for RRs to write in The Literacy Club Journal; they can reflect on what they saw, what they heard, and what they thought.
4. Rapid Readers discuss problems, successes, ideas, and opinions. Set aside 15-20 minutes, preferably immediately following the **Field Notes** session, for students to talk and share insights about their sessions.
5. Rapid Readers plan and prepare lesson plans and preview predictable books. This can be accomplished at different times: during language arts period on days The Literacy Club does not meet; as a homework assignment; or during free time, when other assignments have been completed.
6. Training or in-service sessions are conducted. (During regular class schedule for literature/reading and language arts class; during guidance counseling sessions; or during specially scheduled, small group sessions for students who require a particular training session.)

Field Notes

Although buddy reading programs and tutoring programs are being tried in many communities throughout North America, one of the things which makes this program unique is the reflection and reporting process accomplished through **Field Notes**. RRs are told that teachers keep notes about how

lessons go so that they will be able to be responsive to their students and plan more effective lessons in the future. As often as possible, both teachers should respond to entries, celebrating, questioning, giving resources, and so forth. At various times **Field Notes** can even be exchanged among students. The more the students recognize the presence of a real purpose and a genuine audience, the more their writing and their thinking will develop. Further reflection can be accomplished by encouraging students periodically to review the last few weeks, and to reflect on what they've learned, what is changing, what seems to be a dead end, and how their ability to solve problems is evident.

Field Notes offer a special window into the RRs' cognitive processing: they are a helpful ethnographic tool for noting the kind of assistance individual RRs need and as a portfolio of data that teams of teachers, administrators, researchers, and students can use to continue improving the process.

There is ample evidence from several years of Field Notes that students are making progress with regard to the goals established by the teacher. The following is a representative sample (Remember Field Notes are rough drafts.):

Goal: Gain confidence in yourself.

10/17/91. "Today I thought V— was going to cry because S— told me that V— cryed outside. And when it was time for Literacy club and when V—come in she was not crying and she came in and she was so happy. I really can't believe this. I think V— is going to trust me."

3/31/92. "Today I let my LR pick the book. The book name 'Going to School.' When we got done with the book I told LR to draw a picture and write and caption but he didn't get to color it. Today is the best day, because my LR read the book by himself."

Goal: Be aware of the knowledge you have so you can share it with others.

10/19/89. (Notes from one of the observers, an extra student who did not have an LR.) "Rapid Reader let the little reader fool around to much. If I were in that situation I would make the little reader sit in a corner, and that way we would work until he calmed down."

11/16/90. "I also learn something, I learn that you can teach a little kid if you tried hard and if you don't' give up."

Goal: Be a good observer.

10/19/89. (These activities accompanied a text on modes of transportation; the LR was legally blind, and thus, the RR recognized that he needed to provide much kinesthetic activity.) "Today me and my little reader have so moch fun that I forgot to rite what he like we preten that we are going to town and riding in moter bike, fire engen and hellocopter, cars, and jumpping stick. it is fun I would like to do that agan.

Goal: Be able to record what you've seen.

10/19/89. "Today my Little Reader and me did was listen to me and I told her to draw. And I did want she said. Today it work. I told her that I was like her friend and like her

sister so don't be shy. And she siad okay I won't be shy nomore because you told me that you are my friend."

Goal: Be aware of your Little Reader's needs, and be able to adapt to those needs.

10/24/91. "My LR read a book with me. the book was called The Seed. This book was a short book. That's why I chose this book to read to my LR. (Some RRs had been concerned that their LRs were getting bored while reading books with too much text.)

3/6/90. ". . . I ask him do you no alphabet he don't answer me next time I will let him write alphabet."

Goal: Plan and carry out your plans.

10/5/89. "My little reader was very jumpy today. He was running around in the class. He read just a little bit but mostly he was playing around. He would get a book and he would not want to read it and he would go get a different one. Before we had left he had[n't] read one whole book. Next week I will try to act the book out. He will probly like that. I will also have him act out parts. . . . when he is interested in the book he will really sit down and read."

Goal: Keep learning about the literacy process so you will become a better reader and writer.

1/18/90. "She know how to spell some words but if she can't spell a word, I always encourage her to spell her best."

When writing **Field Notes**, RRs should place more emphasis on content than on grammatical correctness. This will allow them to focus on their Literacy Club activities, while also providing teachers with valuable insights regarding students' strengths and weaknesses. After all, since there are many structures and grammatical forms which are not standard, why not use them as a vehicle for teaching the fine points of standard written English?

As was mentioned earlier, Field Notes can be special windows into the students' abilities; by reading through the entries, teachers can be aware of certain conventions and mechanics which might be taught through mini-lessons during in-service sessions. Over the years, there have been mini-lessons on the use of quotation marks, subject/verb agreement, or a particular structure. Sometimes small groups of students who exhibit the same patterns can be drawn together for a mini-lesson.

The emphasis in writing Field Notes is not on form. Rather, students are encouraged to write quickly and get as many of their ideas down as possible about what they see, what they hear, and what they think. In addition, research over the past 60 years has shown that conscious correction and attention to grammatical forms is ineffective and does not improve writing. Recent research shows that younger learners, especially, gain grammatical skills through five to seven years of exposure to comprehensible input in settings where the focus is on communicating messages, not in studying grammar. Thus frequent writing, longer entries, and writing for authentic audiences about real events, combined

with massive input through interesting texts (literature, comic books, non-fiction texts), will help these learners more than will correcting their Field Notes.

That is not to say there are no other writing experiences that go through a writing process from rough draft, to conferencing, to revising, to editing. Such writing experiences occur often; one of these is when the students write to the first-grade teacher, telling her how things are going, so that she may have more information with which to make decisions for assessment purposes. This opportunity to teach the techniques of standard English is much more effective than isolated, discrete skills. There is a real reason for their wanting to "do it right," as they often put it.

Early in the year, hold a training session on invented or temporary spelling. The teachers can talk about what invented spelling is and define the stages of the development of standard spelling. Because the LRs will be using it, and because some of the RRs may be new writers of English, they should be encouraged to use temporary spelling too. This will have the effect of freeing the writing so they can concentrate on what they have to say.

Recently, a year's Field Notes from five students were analyzed for evident changes in writing. The results are especially important because all of the children had been learning English as an additional language for two to four years. The writing shows dramatic changes as the cognitive and social understandings of their roles and tasks evolve. There appear to be three changes in writing development:

1. There is a movement from a concern for themselves and a strong need for control and authority to a more relaxed posture with an acceptance or sharing the responsibility with their LRs (e.g., moving from "I *let* my LR," with an underlying sense of control, to "my LR and I wrote a book today.").
2. There is an obvious growing confidence in their behaviors and actions as teachers (e.g., moving from purely descriptive stream of consciousness about their experience to talking about the relationship of teaching and learning in '**cause and effect**' terminology such as "I plan to let him to work on his book *because* I want him to finished the book.").
3. There is an obvious growing confidence in their knowledge of their students and in the teaching process (e.g., moving from early use of disclaimers such as "I think" to speaking with authority about the literacy process, as in "My L.R. has learn how to spell words and read. I have learned too.").

Ongoing Service

As The Literacy Club gains momentum, there are many opportunities to share new ideas with students or review old ones. Discussions held after the writing of Field Notes always contain nuggets to remind students of the goals, to connect those ideas to experiences they may be having in other parts of the day, and to remind students of the various **Language Experience** charts (e.g., spelling development or the list of questions they want to ask the LRs) which are evident in the room. Cook has found that the more she turns the control of the teaching situation over to her students, the more their experiences become the curriculum of her language arts classes.

Evidence of the cumulative effect of **In-service Sessions** is clear in the following entries of one boy named Thanh. Several in-service sessions had focused on how to share books with the LRs and after one

of the earliest sessions, it appeared to Thanh that he wouldn't have to worry much about keeping the LRs attention.

> *9/26/91. "I follow my lesson plan and I think so that my LR liked it. My lesson was that I would let my LR look through the pictures in the book and I would read him a book. The title of the book was "Quack, Quack." When I read my LR that book, I think my LR likes that book because when I read the words, he was reading along with me. And that's why I thought my LR likes that book. "*

Like all teaching, however, Thanh soon learns that not all days are perfect.

> *10/3/91. "When my LR came to me and sit down beside me, I ask my LR want to read a book and he said 'yes.' The title of the book is 'The Very Busy Spider.' When I read him that book he said 'he already that book.' So I read him that book again . When I finish reading, I asked him do he likes that book? He saids 'no.'. . .*

And so it went for several sessions. Thanh was baffled by his LR's behavior. Regardless of what he planned in his lessons, his LR kept saying "no" when Thanh asked him if he liked the book. He brought the problem to the class and they reviewed many of the techniques they had already discussed concerning alternative ways of sharing books. He went back with renewed energy, and finally his persistence paid off.

> *10/15/91. "Today my LR was good because he was reading along with me. Last time he didn't want to read. The book my LR bring from his classroom was 'Smokey the Firefighter.' Then I read him that book. After I finish reading that book, I ask him does he enjoy that book and he said 'yes.' Then I read him another book and it was my book that I checked out from this classroom. The title of the book is 'Good Morning, Maxine.' I read him that book and when I finish I asked him does he like that book more than the book that he brought from his classroom? And he said that he like the book that I checked out more better than his book."*

Throughout the year, **In-service Sessions** become brainstorming sessions focusing on various issues. The following are lists made by variousliteracy clubs over the years which reflect the sophistication often displayed by students.

Rapid Readers Sharing Their Experiences.

1. Get to know the LR. Ask questions.
2. Try to figure out how they feel about things in the books. Ask them.
3. Try to find out how they feel about things in their lives. Talk to them.
4. Find out ways to get the LRs interested in The Literacy Club.
5. Begin with small words and go to harder words.
6. Start with books that do not have a lot of words.
7. Talk about letters and the sounds they make.
8. Ask you LRs what kinds of books they like.

9. Let LRs read the books as you help them.
10. Read to your LRs when they ask you to read.
11. Talk about what the words mean.
12. Explain parts of the story if you LR does not understand.
13. Believe that your LR can read and help him/her.

Ways to Show that Reading is Fun.

1. Pretend that you are one of the characters.
2. Do sound effects.
3. Act out parts of the story.
4. Help your LRs to use imagination to help them understand the book. Tell them they can change the story if they want.
5. Make things that are in the stories. If there is a castle, build a castle.
6. Let them make their own books so they will know what books are like.
7. Get ideas from the stories you have read.
8. Make up new ideas for books. Change events, characters, settings, conflicts, and endings to make the story different.

What Rapid Readers Do to Help Little Readers Gain Confidence.

1. Talk in a positive way. Compliment the LRs.
2. Point out the things LRs already know and can do.
3. Give LRs enough time to take a chance on trying something new.
4. Give encouragement and let LRs know that you'll be there to help.
5. Give praise when LRs try.
6. Avoid scolding them or getting mad. You have to show a lot of patience.
7. Avoid "put-downs."
8. Tell your LR to be positive about the things others do.
9. Encourage your LRs to be positive about the things they do.
10. Tell LRs to think about *The Little Engine That Could.*

What Are Ways Rapid Readers Can Get Along with Little Readers?

1. Know when LRs are having a bad day.
   a. They will be fidgety.
   b. They will think the book is boring.
   c. They will daydream and think about other things.
   d. They will watch other RRs and LRs.
   e. They will be easily distracted.
2. Chat with your LR to find out how things are going.
3. Point out positive and negative things LRs have done. Be careful not to hurt their feelings.

4. Talk to the LRs and tell them what "good" looks like, sounds like, and feels like. That way, they know what you want them to do.
5. Listen to your LRs when they talk to you.

How Can Rapid Readers Avoid Having a Bad Day?

1. Leave your own problems aside until later.
2. Avoid losing your temper, even when LRs get you mad.
3. Take two deep breaths when things go wrong.
4. Have a positive attitude and show positive energy.
5. Be rested.
6. Be sure to have a plan.
7. Be sure to have a book to read to your LR.
8. Rehearse reading the book *before* you read to your LR.
9. Have many ideas to keep your LR busy.
10. Model appropriate behavior.
11. Sit close to your LR. You can even hold him/her on your lap.
12. Avoid leaving your LR alone while you talk to your friends.
13. Work with a bigger group, if your LR can't talk to you. (Language mismatch.)
14. Try to find ways to make your LR feel happy.

How Do Rapid Readers Get Little Readers Involved with a Book?

1. Talk with the LRs about words and meanings.
2. Ask the LRs to predict what will happen next.
3. Encourage the LRs to choose books they like.
4. Choose books that have the right amount of text. Think about the length of the book.
5. Choose books that your LR can understand from their own experiences; use real-life things when you tell stories.
6. Use picture books, and let LRs talk about them and tell stories about the pictures.
7. Help LRs to stay focused.
   a. Make eye contact often.
   b. Stop and see if they are listening.
   c. Ask questions and talk about what you have read.
   d. Find out your LR's opinions and responses.
   e. Encourage your LR to ask YOU questions about the books and about what YOU think about the things you read.
8. Ask your LR if the things in the book have happened to him/her. (How was their situation similar to or different from the one in the book?)

What Do You Think About When You Write Your Lesson Plan?

1. I think about the book and the topic. After I am all done (with planning the way I will present the book), I think about the characters.
2. I try to remember what other RRs do.
3. I think about what kind of book he likes and if we will work in a group or not work in a group.
4. Does my Little Reader like to do art? If he gets to draw my Little Reader will like the book.
5. I think about what we do to help LRs get involved with a book.

Because of the respect and trust you have accorded your students, you'll want to be open to opportunities for them to share their expertise.

The following are some of the activities RRs have participated in over the years.

1. Sharing perceptions of their LR with the first grade teacher, especially at grading periods.
2. Being a pen pal to other RRs, either in the same school or another one.
3. Being a pen pal to a class of university students in a literacy methods class; such an experience allows one set of motivated teacher/students to share with another set. (In one case, students in a methods class sent copies of their literacy textbook so they could talk about those issues.) If the university is close, arrange for mutual visitations.
4. Helping other literacy clubs get started.
5. Reporting to the school board on their progress.
6. Sharing with parents what they are doing and how the LRs are progressing.

Benefits to Students

The Literacy Club has, from its inception, been a collaboration of teachers, researchers, administrators, community leaders, and students. As the model has evolved, adaptations have been made as a result of observations that certain aspects were not as effective as they could be. Research has informed the framework for The Literacy Club, and now research about the results is helping inform the teachers and administrators about the benefits of The Literacy Club.

Benefits for Little Readers seemed obvious from the very beginning. They receive one-on-one attention, often from someone who speaks the same native language. They have someone who will listen, understand, and care teaching them and making learning fun. Stirton finds that a child who begins with an "I hate to read/this is boring" attitude soon develops into an "I can't wait for RRs to come" child, and begins an absolute love affair with books. As the training for the RRs becomes more focused and effective, the benefits to the LRs become more obvious, particularly in their writing. The LRs develop a sense of ownership, talking about "My RR." They are proud to share with their own class the joint projects they have done with their RRs.

The Rapid Readers also profit in many ways. Their interpersonal skills and sensitivity toward others are greatly enhanced. They have control of situations which provide them with a true understanding of the nature of learning and getting along with others. The concrete level of understanding concepts and skills they are teaching their Little Readers becomes instrumental in helping Rapid Readers internalize

knowledge for their own use. For example, the inclusion of opinions, examples, observations, and rationale which are so much a part of their Field Notes is often transferred to reports, essays, and other writing assignments.

These students show wisdom in their assessment of various situations and are capable of making decisions which generally improve circumstances. Their confidence and self-esteem are demonstrated by their eagerness to offer advice, even to grown-ups. (Seventeen of 33 students, for instance, offered to speak about the Literacy Club at a faculty meeting.)

The students who are becoming bilingual develop and use native language skills; in doing so, they also become more proficient in English. Both language minority students and native speakers of English profit and grow in countless ways as they become increasingly aware of their own strengths. Feelings of pride and accomplishment are the result. Since this was one of the major goals for RRs, it was important to document ways in which this confidence was manifested. Data have been collected and are now being analyzed. It is hoped that this confidence will continue through their school life (plans are now underway to follow this year's RRs), and that many former RRs will choose to enter helping professions, particularly teaching (data on career preferences have been collected and are being analyzed).

A Checklist for Setting Up the Literacy Club and Answers to Commonly Asked Questions

1. **What should I do if I want to start The Literacy Club at my school?**

Discuss the idea with an administrator or program specialist. Identify teachers who might participate in the project. Arrange for teachers to meet to discuss objectives and plans for getting started. Continue meeting on a regular basis in order to provide support and additional information and to share ideas which have been successful.

2. **How do I justify the time The Literacy Club takes from the regular curriculum?**

In schools where the basal texts are not mandated and where whole language approaches are sanctioned, The Literacy Club can be implemented quite easily. The natural progression to literature studies and student writing activities provides a vehicle for teaching curriculum requirements. In other schools, creativity and thematic teaching enable instructors to supplement reading, library skills, and guidance counseling, among others, with the many facets of The Literacy Club.

3. **Where do I find books for The Literacy Club?**

Often, the books which have been offered by book clubs such as Scholastic and Troll are excellent choices. Students may have books to bring from home. Sometimes community service clubs, companies, or private benefactors can help provide a good selection of books. Libraries are another good source.

4. **What should be the physical set up for the regular Literacy Club sessions?**

Half of the students from each class should be together in one room, the other half in the other room. Even though Literacy Club classes have been large, this arrangement minimizes the noise level and allows maximum space for students to read and work on projects and activities. An alternative would be to put all the students in one room.

5. What should I do if there is a Rapid Reader who cannot get along with his/her Little Reader?

Try many interventions before making a change. One change often triggers many other requests, and students should give priority to finding ways to work with those to whom they have been assigned. In a job situation, for example, you are not always able to pick and choose the people with whom you must associate, and being equipped to make the best of an undesirable relationship can be rewarding and satisfying, as well as empowering. However, if, after much intervention, a pair finds it difficult to get along, consider making a switch.

6. Should there be partner changes from time to time?

It is preferable to have the students make a commitment to each other for the entire year. This allows them to get to know one another and to become more consistent in their approaches and strategies. It also minimizes management and reorganization, which can detract from the more productive aspects of the project.

7. How do I set up the management system for The Literacy Club?

Choose two or three student managers to escort the LRs to and from the classroom. These managers will also arrange for substitutes when RRs are absent, and sometimes use generic lesson plans they have prepared to assist RRs who have been absent or have come unprepared. Managers are also responsible for passing out folders and other materials needed for the sessions. They serve as observers, monitoring what RRs are doing and offering critiques and suggestions during discussion periods.

8. Must all Literacy Club models be the same?

We have provided the design for the model we have found effective and successful: However, it continually changes with each new group of students and each time the project is expanded to other teachers and other grade levels. Be flexible, but ultimately let students plan and preside over the sessions with their LRs, since research findings and educational documents support this standard. The bottom line is that teachers are different and there will be different degrees of teacher direction and a variety of ideas and philosophies that will influence the design of individual projects.

9. What is the teacher's role in The Literacy Club?

Teachers serve as resource people, providing materials for student-planned activities, books, teaching strategies, training, and general expertise. It is sometimes challenging to step back and allow students to take their own directions. By becoming an observer, noting things that are successful, and writing suggestions for ways to improve things which do not seem to be going so well, teachers can serve student "teachers" in a collaborative partnership.

10. What should I do if I want to start a Literacy Club?

a. Decide who will be your teacher partner and which age groups and classes will be involved.
b. Consider compatibility of your teaching styles (traditional, holistic, etc.).
c. Together make a list of goals and objectives.
d. Write a list of expectations which each of you may have for the RRs (keep them general and flexible).
e. Give the RRs several weeks to become familiar with their reading materials; hold regular sharing sessions.

f. Plan and schedule a Mixer Activity.

g. During the Mixer Activity, observe interactions as the two groups meet for the first time. They should interact freely and without assigned partners.

h. Set up a management system for your Literacy Club.

i. Plan and schedule a series of in-service sessions to help RRs get started.

j. During the reading sessions, watch the activities and communications as RRs and LRs engage in literacy events. Intervene if problems arise, and praise and celebrate when there are successes.

k. Enthusiastically provide support and encouragement, particularly when "off days" happen and students become disheartened. In-service sessions can be very effective in helping students (and teachers) experience a feeling of empowerment to improve the situation. They should be planned whenever RRs require support and/or assistance.

l. Provide a wide selection of good books and opportunities for RRs to read, write, and share literature through activities that promote comprehension and extend concepts.

m. Be flexible and be prepared for constant change and growth as both RRs and LRs get caught up in the excitement and confidence that comes as they acquire literacy skills.

n. Continually remind RRs of their role as teachers, review teacher expectations, and discuss how the RRs' plans are meeting those expectations.

o. Continue to provide training and information on topics such as elements of literature, teaching techniques, and activity ideas in response to problems, questions, and objectives of the participants. Above all else, ***be flexible***.

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The Literacy Club

The Literacy Club is a model cross-aged, paired reading program that is being successfully used in an elementary school in central California.

The Literacy Club pairs older students—Rapid Readers—with younger students—Little Readers—in a yearlong reading experience that is managed by the teachers from both classes. As mentors, the Rapid Readers develop their literacy, reading, and social skills by helping Little Readers learn to read.

The Literacy Club outlines the day-to-day activities students engage in as part of the program at the elementary school level and provides invaluable insights to the students' development and to the implementation of the Literacy Club program. This Information Guide includes a step-by-step checklist for replicating the Literacy Club model program at other schools and grade levels.

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